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the two kinds are formed side by side, and neutralize each other in the solution; or it may even be, that, as is the case with truly inactive tartaric acid, there is a true neutralization within the molecule itself. Which of these hypotheses is correct is a question for further work to decide.

— Gaillard's 'French for Young Folks' (New York, Werner) is constructed on a sound pedagogic plan, has numerous and good illustrations, and is nicely gotten up. It devotes special attention to the subject of French pronunciation, and gives some very practical directions on the subject. We only question whether the introductory chapters do not employ too many long words to be easily comprehended by the beginner.

— The Fish Commission steamer 'Albatross' left Washington last week on her extended cruise to the Pacific coast. The voyage was arranged by the late Professor Baird, and is now being carried out by his successor, Mr. G. Brown Goode, the new commissioner. The 'Albatross' has been engaged for several years in the deep-sea work of the Fish Commission in the Atlantic, the results obtained being of great economic and scientific value. There has come a demand from the Pacific coast for similar work there, where the fisheries have not been developed to any extent, little being known of the number or character of the food-fishes of that coast. To hunt out the food-fishes, locate their habitats, and to develop the resources of the great Pacific, is the task before the 'Albatross,' which is thoroughly equipped for the scientific work. The scientific party aboard will consist of Prof. Leslie A. Lee of Bowdoin, who goes as chief naturalist; Mr. Thomas Lee, who has been engaged on the deep-sea work of the commission for a long time; and Mr. C. H. Townsend, who has just returned from an expedition to Central America. The 'Albatross' is officered and manned by the navy, and is under the command of Lieut.-Com. Zera L. Tanner. The 'Albatross' will reach California next May. Stops will be made *en route*, which will delay the voyage somewhat, the time being occupied by the scientists in making shore-collections. The ship goes out without any definite period fixed as to its return, but it is not probable the vessel will be seen in the Atlantic again for three or four years. It is deemed important to carry on investigations not only in the latitude of California, but off the Alaska coast. The ship will touch frequently at ports on the Pacific coast, and be in constant communication with the Fish Commission. It is probable, too, that from time to time other scientists will join her for the purpose of doing special work. The scientific outfit of the vessel is declared by those who have examined it to be the best that was ever put aboard a vessel.

— Dr. Cohn, oculist at Breslau, has invented a new apparatus for testing the eyesight of children. This is a matter which is scarcely attended to at all in this country. Periodical tests have shown that there is much more small mischief in the eyes of young students than is generally supposed, which can easily be stopped if the necessary precautions are taken in time. Dr. Cohn's invention consists of a white board twenty-five centimetres square, to which are fastened six rows of hooks, shaped thus \square , one centimetre square. He who possesses a normal eyesight will be able to tell, at a distance of six metres in ordinary daylight, in which direction — upwards, downwards, to the right, or to the left — the hooks, which are painted of different colors, are turned. Pupils who cannot do this injure their eyes by constantly looking at the blackboard. The same board may be used to determine whether the ordinary daylight is sufficient for the rooms. As soon as the teacher cannot distinguish the direction of the hooks at a distance of six metres without straining his eyes, the gas ought to be lighted at once.

— In the December number of *Harper's* is an article by Mr. George F. Kunz, the gem expert of Messrs. Tiffany & Co., on the precious stones of America. Mr. Kunz makes it clear that the alleged recent discoveries of diamonds in Kentucky amounts to nothing; but sapphires, spinels, crystals of topaz, beryls, garnets the finest in the world, tourmalines, amethysts, and turquoises are obtained in several localities in considerable profusion. The striking feature of the article is the lithographed page of these gems, containing a diamond, Manchester, Va.; sapphire, Helena, Montana; sapphire, Franklin, N.C.; topaz, Crystal Peak, Col.; emerald, Stony Point, N.C.; aquamarine, Stoneham, Me.; beryl (golden-colored),

Litchfield, Conn.; garnets (cut and natural), Gallup, N.M.; peridot, Gallup, N.M.; tourmaline, Mount Mica, Paris, Me.; tourmaline (green with red centre), Paris, Me.; lithia emerald (hiddenite), Stony Point, N.C.; amethyst, Stow, Me.; cairngorm stone, Pike's Peak, Col.; turquoise, Nevada; arrow-points of obsidian, carnelian, and agatized wood, Oregon; pearl, Paterson, N.J. To produce this plate, fully twenty impressions were required, and we believe this was the first colored plate ever published in *Harper's*.

— At a special meeting of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution held Nov. 18, Prof. S. P. Langley was elected secretary of the institution, to succeed the late Prof. S. F. Baird.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

* * * The attention of scientific men is called to the advantages of the correspondence columns of SCIENCE for placing promptly on record brief preliminary notices of their investigations. Twenty copies of the number containing his communication will be furnished free to any correspondent on request.

The editor will be glad to publish any queries consonant with the character of the journal.

Correspondents are requested to be as brief as possible. The writer's name is in all cases required as proof of good faith.

Cheyenne.

IN the note published in your issue of Nov. 11, I made an unaccountable mistake, and wish to correct it. The Cheyennes are the 'cut-arms,' and in the sign-language are designated by drawing the hand, in imitation of a knife, across the biceps of the arm. It is the Pawnees whose sign is wolf-ears made with thumb and forefinger.

Your types say *loo-yah* erroneously for *loo-hah*.

The French trappers told me a legend of the Sioux to the effect that once in holding a council they were disturbed by the noisy play of the children, and moved over to another creek to hold the council in quiet. In attempting to overtake their parents, the children took the back track on which the village had lately come in. They kept going, and the boys and girls grew up and intermarried, and became another tribe, the Cheyennes. The Sioux call themselves *Lah-ko-ta* (the *t* strongly dental), not Dakota, meaning 'cut-throats,' the sign being the open hand drawn edgewise across the throat.

GEO. WILSON.

Lexington, Mo., Nov. 15.

The 'Act of God' and the Railway-Company.

RETURNING from New York Nov. 12, the train was crowded with passengers. At the forward end of the car was a large stove full of red-hot coals. This stove had no guard, nor hardly any thing to prevent it from upsetting. A slight collision would have emptied the contents of the stove, and probably several people would have been burned to death. Would Mr. Appleton Morgan consider such an affair an 'Act of God'? ASAPH HALL.

Washington, Nov. 19.

Changes in Indian Languages.

I OBSERVE a blunder I made in attributing the word *quisquis* ('a hog') to Schoolcraft instead of Zeisberger, in my communication on changes in Indian languages, in *Science* of Nov. 18. The Onondagas now pronounce it *kweaskweas*, almost in four syllables, and with a resemblance to a hog's melodious note. I may add that the Onondagas divide 'Hiawatha,' a name of their own, differently from many white people. It is pronounced by them 'Hi-a-wat-ha.' 'Onondaga' they sound like the whites in talking with them, but retain the old broad sound among themselves.

W. M. BEAUCHAMP.

Baldwinsville, N.Y., Nov. 19.

Natural History Notes on Alaska.

IN my 'Natural History Notes on Alaska,' forming Part III. of the 'Report of the Cruise of the Steamer "Corwin" in the Arctic Ocean in 1885,' which has recently been published as Ex. Doc. 153, Forty-ninth Congress, second session, I notice two plates of fishes, and one plate representing a plant. I desire to say that I never saw these plates before they appeared in this sketch, nor can I explain how they came to be inserted in it. I disclaim all responsibility for the plates, and I do not indorse them. They are inaccurate, and absurd pictures of what they purport to represent.

CHAS. H. TOWNSEND.

Washington, Nov. 20.